



Grand Avenue Historic District

PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT

CCF 231625

MARCH 2024

**GRAND AVENUE
PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT
AND PRESERVATION GUIDELINES
MARCH 2024**

PROPERTY NAME

Historic: Grand Avenue/West Wisconsin Avenue

Common: Grand Avenue Historic District

LOCATION

Addresses: 3034 W. Wisconsin Ave., 3046 W. Wisconsin Ave., 3111 W.
Wisconsin Ave., 3121 W. Wisconsin Ave., 3127 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Classification: District

Under s. 320-21-9-c of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances, this district was reviewed for its effect on low- and moderate-income housing within its boundaries. To the knowledge of staff there is only one residential unit within the district and it belongs to one of the building's owners.

NOMINATION DETAILS

Owner: 3034 W. Wisconsin Ave.
PROPERTIES LLC
C/O TOM CARR/R SOUTHERLAND
3046 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53208

3046 W. Wisconsin Ave.
PROPERTIES LLC
6130 W. Tropicana, #199
Las Vegas, NV 89103

3111 W. Wisconsin Ave.
SAVANNAH HOLDINGS LLC
3111 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53208

3121 W. Wisconsin Ave.
QUID ROE LLC
ATTNH: MARK ROEKER
3121 W. Wisconsin Ave. #3
Milwaukee, WI 53224

3127 W. Wisconsin Ave.
3127 W WISCONSIN LLC
3127 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53208

Nominator: Jim Dieter
Aldersperson: Ald. Robert Bauman, 4th District

DISTRICT DATA

YEARS BUILT 1889-1913
ARCHITECTS Crane and Barkhausen, Otto Strack, Edward Townsend Mix, H.P. Schnetzky and Son
STYLES Queen Anne, Jacobethan, Arts & Crafts, Craftsman/Bungalow

GENERAL CHARACTER

The Grand Avenue Historic District consists of five properties that were all originally constructed for single-family residential purposes. The buildings range in date of construction from 1889 to 1913 and cover the period of development along West Wisconsin Avenue that includes grand “country estates” for wealthy Milwaukeeans in the 1870s-1910s. Beginning in the 1910s, many of these grand estates were redeveloped for apartment buildings, religious facilities, or other civic uses. Though many of these five buildings were subsequently used for non-residential uses, they represent the last cluster of intact single-family residential development from the Grand Avenue era of what is now West Wisconsin Avenue. The buildings all have a general setback from W. Wisconsin Ave. of between fifty and sixty feet and contain large front lawns with a mix of landscaping material. All of the buildings are on large lots that extend at least one hundred and seventy-five feet from W. Wisconsin Ave. The four mansions are all two-and-one-half stories tall, while the more modest residence at 3034 W. Wisconsin Ave. is a one-and-one-half story bungalow. Over time, the residential buildings have been converted to commercial or office use. External modifications have been minimal and they retain their residential appearance.

HISTORY

The following detailed history of Grand Avenue/West Wisconsin Avenue was written by HPC staff for the Historic Designation Study Report for the Pettibone/White House, located at 2051 W. Wisconsin Avenue, just east of the subject properties:

West Wisconsin Avenue today is a busy traffic arterial characterized by commercial buildings, churches, schools, apartment buildings and residences. During the early settlement period it was a thoroughfare that connected with the

Blue Mound Road at its west end and provided access out of the city. Originally, Wisconsin Avenue was not a continuous thoroughfare. The portion west of 8th Street did not connect with the Wisconsin Avenue east of 8th Street. An insurmountable 60 foot high bluff west of 5th Street required west bound travelers to jog over from Wisconsin Avenue to Michigan Street and then climb the hill at 8th Street in order to proceed westward. This separation created a unique and somewhat secluded neighborhood atop the hill. Early on, this hilltop was the location of large land holdings, held by investors who waiting for the city to expand westward. Some land was farmed and some owners created gentlemen's estates with impressive houses surrounded by large landscaped grounds. West Wisconsin Avenue became one of the prestige thoroughfares, attracting the very well to do such as Alexander Mitchell, Harrison Ludington and John Plankinton. Over time, the estates were subdivided as more and more upper income residents wanted to live along the thoroughfare. Intense construction of expensive housing occurred in the 1880s and 1890s. Over time, the name changed from its original Spring Street designation to Grand Avenue, reflecting the elite quality of the area. Grand Avenue was eventually renamed West Wisconsin Avenue.

West Wisconsin Avenue was always a broad street. Discussions were held as early as 1848 about developing a monumental boulevard on Wisconsin Avenue. It was at this time that Wisconsin Avenue was cut through from 5th to 8th Streets. When that monumental road project was completed it was discovered that Wisconsin Avenue did not meet up with the earlier road atop the hill but ran parallel to it to 11th Street where the two streets joined into one. Rather than eliminate one of the roads, it was envisioned that a monumental boulevard, 150 feet wide, would extend from 8th to 34th Streets and enhance the luxury estates being established there. There would be a walk on both sides and one in the center for footmen. Trees were to be planted along either side and in the center in emulation of similar boulevards in Paris. The ambitious scheme was never realized, most likely due to its cost, but the separation of the two streets from 8th to 11th Streets resulted in the creation of the present short boulevard which long served as a monumental approach to what was once Milwaukee's most exclusive residential area. Today the median island is one block shorter that it was originally, due to freeway construction between Tenth and Eleventh Streets. This median, now filled with heroic sculpture, is known as the Court of Honor.

By 1877 Wisconsin Avenue, then known as Grand Avenue, was described as a park like thoroughfare: "Grand Avenue...lined with heavy shade trees...and fronted on either hand by elegant residences and carefully kept grounds...at the west end of the thoroughfare [the grounds] are observed to be much more extensive, giving opportunity for the display of skill in landscape gardening...the absence of division fences,...making the avenue to seemingly pass through one immense and elegant park."¹

The one exception to the residential character of the street was Wisconsin Avenue's intersection with 27th Street. There, a small, one block long commercial

¹ *Milwaukee Illustrated* 1877, pp. 21-24

node developed that served the working class neighborhood of Merrill Park to the south of the Avenue. Many residents there worked at the giant complex of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad repair shops in the valley. Businesses at the southwest corner of the intersection included saloons, stores, a bakery, a harness shop, a meat market, and blacksmith.

Although the entire roadway was never officially laid out as a divided roadway under the overview of the Milwaukee Parks Board as was Newberry Boulevard or McKinley Boulevard, it did get classified as a “boulevard” under city ordinances. That allowed for traffic controls and other restrictions in order to maintain the street’s character and bar heavy trucking for example. That character began to erode with the introduction of non-residential development.

By the dawn of the 20th century, commercialization was spreading westward from the heart of the Central Business District. Likewise, educational institutions like Marquette University began to make their appearance. The opening of the Wisconsin Avenue viaduct in 1911 provided a more convenient way to cross the Menomonee Valley and access portions of the West Side as well as Wauwatosa. Traffic along the thoroughfare increased. Zoning laws instituted in 1920 allowed and encouraged multi-family housing and commercial development that was already occurring. As they saw their neighborhood change, wealthy individuals began to leave their mansions in favor of more secure neighborhoods in the Upper East Side. Health care facilities started buying up the large mansions and eventually replace them with larger buildings. At one time, the west side had the highest concentration of health care facilities in the city, a number of which could be found on Wisconsin Avenue. Apartment buildings replaced old mansions as health care workers and educational workers and students needed places to live. Large houses became fraternity and sorority houses; many were converted into rooming houses. Large clubhouses for fraternal organizations also found a home on the avenue in the 1920s.

Despite the changes, there was still a strongly rooted perception of Wisconsin Avenue as being more elite and having a certain cachet that other streets lacked. The apartment buildings constructed here tended to be larger and more highly embellished and there developed the largest concentration of courtyard style apartments and high rise apartments in the city. This perception greatly diminished during the Great Depression and after World War II. Filling stations which started showing up at commercial nodes like 27th Street and 35th Street began to appear. In recent decades, fast food restaurants and convenience stores and even a car wash have replaced many of the remaining large houses. In some instances, commercial fronts were added to the facades of former mansions. Facilities for the treatment of drug and alcohol abuse and emotional disorders have come to occupy some of the more modest remaining residential structures. Others became offices for attorneys.

Historic photographs show West Wisconsin Avenue as a tree-lined broad street. While the planned landscaped boulevard of 1848 never materialized, medians were built over time to address the necessities of traffic control. Some are paved and

some planted. These medians also serve as locations for traffic signals or street lights. They vary in width from 10 feet to 14 feet and help direct traffic making turns onto the numerous cross streets.²

Among the grand mansions erected along Grand Avenue during the avenue's heyday is the William H. Simpson House at 3127 W. Wisconsin Avenue (3119 Grand Ave, old). The house was designed by renowned Milwaukee architect Edward Townsend Mix in 1889. William H. Simpson was born in Pennsylvania in 1846, the son of Irish immigrants. He had pursued a number of occupations in the Illinois and Mississippi River area before moving to Milwaukee in 1877 to serve as the superintendent of the North Western Fuel Company, a coal firm based in St. Paul, Minnesota.³ He held the superintendent position with North Western Fuel Company until his death in 1919. The April 29, 1889 permit for the dwelling indicated a cost of \$7,500 for the house. The house was later subdivided for use as a rooming house in the middle of the 20th century, before being used for office space since the mid-1980s.

The Rudolph Stafford House, 3111 W. Wisconsin Ave. (3101 Grand Avenue, old), was designed by Milwaukee architectural firm Crane and Barkhausen in 1892. The house was built for Stafford, president of the R. Stafford Company. The company, formerly known as Fuller & Stafford, advertised themselves as "Purveyors of Fruit and Fancy Groceries" and was located on Commission Row in the Third Ward.⁴ Stafford was born in 1847 and arrived in Milwaukee from New York state in 1879. Following Stafford's death in 1915, the property was sold to Milwaukee County Corporation Counsel Oliver L. O'Boyle.⁵ The house was later purchased by Bertha Wilcox, who converted it to a rooming house. The house was purchased by the Milwaukee Board of Realtors for use as their office in 1954. The Board of Realtors undertook a \$60,000 restoration project of the house in 1976 to match architectural details from the 1890s that had been removed. The Board of Realtors sold the building in 1985 and it has subsequently been used as attorney's offices.

The William H. Meyer House, 3121 W. Wisconsin Avenue (3107/3113 Grand Avenue, old) was designed by Otto Strack in 1899. The building permit issued in April 1899 indicated a cost of \$12,000 for the brick-cased dwelling.⁶ William H. Meyer was born in Kolenfeld, Germany in 1848 and came to the United States in 1867. He excelled in business and became one of the owners of the Milwaukee Tug Boat line. He was also president of the Sheriff's Manufacturing Company, president of the Milwaukee Worsted Cloth Company, and manager of the steamer Christopher. Meyer died of a heart attack while on a business trip in Denver in 1906.⁷ By the 1950s, the residence had been renovated for use as a realty office. The building has contained a number of professional offices since that time.

² City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report, Pettibone/White House." 2014.

³ National Register of Historic Places, Milwaukee-Western Fuel Company Building, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. National Register # 92000108, 12.

⁴ "Realtor's Building Recaptures Its 1890s Flavor," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 4, 1976

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Building Permits Issued," *Milwaukee Journal*, May 1, 1899.

⁷ "Death Comes for W.H. Meyer," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 17, 1906.

The Thekla and George F. Brumder, Jr. House was constructed in 1910 at 3046 W. Wisconsin Avenue (3038 Grand Avenue, old). The house was commissioned by German-American newspaper publisher George Brumder for his son and daughter-in-law. Brumder Sr. hired Milwaukee-based architectural firm H.P. Schnetzky and Son to design the house, which cost \$25,000 to construct. The house was completed after Brumder Sr. died unexpectedly in May 1910. George F. Brumder worked for his father and took over as bank and publishing head following his father's death. He remained publisher of the Milwaukee Herald until the newspaper ceased printing in 1932.⁸ The Brumders lived in the house until 1926, when they relocated to Brumder's parents' former house on 7th Street.⁹

The Brumder property was next occupied by Mrs. Laura Peck (nee Miller) and her son Robert beginning in 1927 and vacating following the divorce from husband Sam Peck in 1930. The house was vacant for two years before Julius and Caroline Kaspar began occupation in 1934. By 1936, the house belonged to Hellmut Wegener, who operated the residence as a boarding house. In 1948, the house was purchased by Our Savior's Lutheran church for \$30,000. The church used the house as a temporary parsonage for Reverend A. Reuben Gornitzka while their congregation constructed their new church just down the block at 3022 W. Wisconsin Ave.¹⁰ Reverend Arnold Nelson and his family occupied the house from the late 1950s through the 1960s. The church used the property as a parsonage, offices, day care, youth center, and meeting rooms.¹¹ Beginning in 1969, Our Savior's used the house as the Next Door Foundation, a youth and young adult outreach center. The congregation sold the Brumder House to Carol and Robert Hirschi in 1997 and the couple restored the house for use as a bed and breakfast. The current owners purchased the property in 2008 and the house is still used as a bed and breakfast and to host events.

The Louis C. Todell House, 3034 W. Wisconsin Avenue (3028 Grand Avenue, old), is a one-and-one-half story Craftsman bungalow constructed in 1913. Todell was born in Chatfield, Minnesota in 1861 and had arrived in Milwaukee by 1880. He married Minnie Fixter in 1888. By that time, Louis was working as a furrier with William Reckmeyer, operating as Todell & Reckmeyer, Furriers, out of 410 Milwaukee Street (710 N. Milwaukee St.). By the mid-1890s, Todell was leading the Pantorium, a clothes cleaning company that had garments "cleaned, pressed, and returned appearing as good as new within forty-eight hours, or less time if necessary."¹² He later became president of the Joseph Fixter Cooperage, a barrel making company started by his father-in-law. After suffering ill health for several years, Todell took his own life in March 1917.¹³

By 1916, the Todell house had been sold to Raymond D. Rockstead, who was listed as being a distributor of Lexington and Allen Motor Cars. Rockstead and his wife, Helen, occupied

⁸ "Death Takes Firm Official," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 15, 1961.

⁹ Tanzillo, Bobby. "Urban Spelunking: Brumder Mansion Bed & Breakfast." OnMilwaukee, November 17, 2016. <https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/brumder-mansion-urban-spelunking>.

¹⁰ "Church Purchases 17 Room House," *Milwaukee Journal*, November 13, 1948.

¹¹ Tanzillo, Bobby. "Urban Spelunking: Brumder Mansion Bed & Breakfast." OnMilwaukee, November 17, 2016. <https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/brumder-mansion-urban-spelunking>.

¹² "The Pantorium Company," *Milwaukee Journal*, December 27, 1892.

¹³ "L. C. Todell Ends His Life in Hotel; Widow Finds Body," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 6, 1917.

the house until 1926, when it was sold to Anna Donner. Ms. Donner appears to have not resided at the home and it was likely used as a rental property.

Elizabeth “Eliza” Trythall, widow of Henry Trythall, and daughters had purchased the home by 1929. The house was listed as having furnished rooms and the Trythalls likely used the property as a rooming house. The house was briefly occupied by Mrs. Laura Miller in 1937 and 1938 before being sold to Frank O. Karll, owner of Karll Store Equipment Company. Karll and his wife, Ogle K., occupied the house until 1940, when it was sold to Rev. George H. and Klaro O. Ziemer. Ziemer was the pastor of Haven on Hope Church and later Wisconsin Tabernacle. The Ziemers remained until 1959 when it was sold to William C. Mellender. Mellender was listed as the assistant manager at Express Freight Lines. The house was acquired by neighboring Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in 1962 for use as a child care center and Sunday school. Starting in 1969, Our Savior’s began using the house as part of the Next Door Foundation. By the mid-1970s, the house was also being used as Genesis House, a drug treatment counseling center. By the mid-1980s, the building was occupied by the West End Community Association. The current owners purchased the property from Carol Hirschi in 2008 and the property is once again being used as a residence.

While the era of magnificent residential development on Grand Avenue came to an end by the 1920s, the legacy of that period is represented by the five intact residential structures located on the 3000 and 3100 blocks of West Wisconsin Avenue.

DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS

Louis C. Todell House; Next Door Foundation (1913) 3034 West Wisconsin Avenue (3028 Grand Avenue, old) Architect unknown

The Louis C. Todell House is a one-and-one-half story Craftsman bungalow set back on a gently sloping, large grassy lawn on the north side of W. Wisconsin Ave. The house was constructed in 1913 at a cost of \$9,500. No architect is listed on the building permit. The house has a hipped asphalt roof with large overhanging eaves and is clad with white stucco with a corbelled red brick chimney extending out of the middle of the east elevation. The front (south) façade is symmetrical and features a central doorway flanked by two bays, each containing twelve-light casement windows with semi-circular fanlight windows above. The entry way is supported by two simple columns with a rectangular door hood with simple cornice with prominent dentils. The door is a more recent six-panel door with semi-circular fanlight and fanlight transom that mirrors the design of the window fanlights. A three-bay dormer is centered on the upper level with a hipped roof with large overhanging eaves. The east façade contains a mix of casement, one-over-one, and piano windows that flank the chimney. A hipped dormer with three bay opening is on the upper level. The west façade also contains a mix of casement and double-hung one-over-one windows. A four-bay bay window with dentil cornice is centered on the façade and an entry door is located to the rear. The upper level contains a hipped dormer and an infilled addition with a shed roof towards the front of the building.

Thekla and George Brumder, Jr. House; Next Door Foundation (1910)

3046 West Wisconsin Avenue (3038 Grand Avenue, old)

H.P. Schnetzky and Son, architects

The Thekla and George Brumder, Jr. House, 3046 W. Wisconsin Ave., is a two-and-one-half story, cross-gabled Arts & Crafts mansion constructed in 1910. The house was designed by the architectural firm of H.P. Schnetzky and Son. The house sits atop a terraced lawn with mature landscaping and trees. Concrete steps and walkway lead to the front entry from W. Wisconsin Ave. A set of concrete steps is also located on the N. 31st St. façade, leading to a rear entryway. A sidewalk connects the front entry to the side entry and yard. The house has a cross-plan and is clad with red brick set in a Flemish bond.

The front façade is an asymmetrical with the entry accessed under a large flat-roof porch that spans the western portion of the front façade. Three large Tudor arches support the upper porch. The upper porch has pointed arches with stone caps. A buttress with stone caps is located on the corner of the porch. The gabled portion of the front façade contains a prominent polygonal bay, with double-hung sash windows with transoms. A smaller bay projects from the second level. A stone water table, sill, and lintel is located on the front façade. The front gable has a large overhanging eave with decorative brackets and decorated bargeboard and a drop finial. Exposed rafter ends are visible underneath the side-gabled portion of the front façade. Two large corbelled chimneys project from the eastern portion of the front façade.

The western façade is located along N. 31st Street. The façade features a prominent gable on the north that mimics that of the front façade. The gabled portion of the façade contains three six-over-one leaded glass windows on the first floor and a paired one-over-one bay on the second and third floors. A stone belt course runs below the windows on the first and second floors and all windows contain stone lintels. A small polygonal side entry is located in the ell portion of the façade and mimics the design of the front porch, with Tudor arches and pointed arches with stone caps on the upper level of the porch. Three leaded glass windows are visible on the second level on the porch. The remaining windows on the side façade are a mix of one-over-one and six-over-one double hung windows. An additional entry is accessed via a small stoop with modern replacement door. A corbelled chimney is located in the ridge line on the south gable and a more simply designed chimney is visible projecting above the side porch.

ARCHITECTS

H.P. Schnetzky and Son designed the Brumder House in 1910. The firm was operated by Herman P. Schnetzky (1850-1916) and his son Hugo W. Schnetzky (1882-1952). The elder Schnetzky arrived in Milwaukee from his native Germany in 1868 and started his career here as a draftsman for architects George Mygatt and H. C. Koch. Schnetzky stayed with H. C. Koch as the firm became one of the three largest architectural firms in Milwaukee. The firm designed many of the city's public schools in the 1870s and 1880s. In 1887, Schnetzky started his own firm and hired Eugene R. Liebert as his draftsman and foreman. The firm's work during this period includes St. Martini Lutheran Church (1887), 1520 S. 16th

Street and the McGeoch Building (1890), 322 E. Michigan Street. Schnetzky and Liebert partnered in 1892. During their partnership, the firm designed buildings such as St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church (1892), 1553 N. 24th St., and the Germania Building (1896), 135 W. Wells Street, which was designed for George Brumder, Sr. Following dissolution of their partnership, Schnetzky again operated his own firm before bringing son Hugo into the firm in 1909. The firm of Schnetzky and Son designed numerous downtown commercial buildings, including Manufacturer's Home Building (1909), 104 E. Mason Street, and F. Mayer Boot and Shoe Co. (1910), 342 N. Water Street. Following Herman's death in 1916, Hugo continued the firm until 1920 before leaving architecture and merging the firm with Henry Horst Co. of Rock Island, Illinois.¹⁴

Rudolph Stafford House; Milwaukee Board of Realtors

3111 West Wisconsin Avenue (3101 Grand Avenue, old)

(1892) Crane and Barkhausen, architect

The Rudolph Stafford House, 3111 W. Wisconsin Ave., is an intact example of a Cream City brick late-Victorian residence. The house was designed by the architectural firm of Crane and Barkhausen and constructed in 1892. The fourteen-room mansion had a cost of \$10,000 when constructed. It is a large, two-and-a-half story Queen Anne-style house with a limestone foundation and cross gable roof. A one-story entry, raised porch with square posts and balusters is located on the front façade. The upper half-story is sided with wood shingles. A three story projecting tower is located on the right side of the front façade. Brick corbelling is found between the first and second floors at the projecting tower and along an oriel window on the east façade. A variety of window sizes are present and all are one-over-one windows. Two large, corbelled chimneys are visible projecting from the roofline.

ARCHITECTS

The house was designed by the architectural firm of **Crane and Barkhausen** and constructed in 1892. Both Charles D. Crane and Carl C. Barkhausen trained under renowned Milwaukee architect Edward Townsend Mix before establishing their own firm in 1888. The firm designed a number of outstanding residential projects, including the George J. Schuster House (1891), 3209 W. Wells St.; the John F. Kern House (1899), 2569 N. Wahl Ave.; and the Conrad Trimborn Rowhouse (1897), 1422-32 W. Kilbourn Ave. Among their non-residential commissions are the German-English Academy Building (1890), 1020 N. Broadway; the First German Methodist Church (1896), 2024 W. Highland Avenue; and the Button Block (1892), 500 N. Water Street. For a more comprehensive history on the firm, refer to the Historic Designation Study Report for the George Schuster House.¹⁵

¹⁴ City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Final Historic Designation Study Report, North Downer Avenue Commercial District." 2001.

¹⁵ City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report, George Shuster House." 2007.

William H. Meyer House; Brokers Building (1899)
3121 West Wisconsin Avenue (3107/3113 Grand Avenue, old)
Otto Strack, architect

The William H. Meyer House, 3121 W. Wisconsin Ave., was designed by architect Otto Strack and constructed in 1899. The house is a two-and-a-half story brick structure with characteristics of the Jacobethan style. The front façade is symmetrical, with front gabled ends. The first floor of the gable ends contains a window bay with three double-hung windows with three transoms. The second level contains paired one-over-one windows with transoms, while the attic level contains a much smaller bay of with three double-hung windows with three transoms. Large stone lintels and smaller sills are found around all window bays. The center bay is a modern projecting brick entryway with a single entry door and transom on the first level and fixed window on the second level.

ARCHITECT

Otto Strack (1857-1935) designed the William H. Meyer House in 1899. Strack was one of Milwaukee's outstanding nineteenth century architects. Some examples of Strack's work include the Pabst Theater (1895) located at 144 East Wells Street, the Kalvelage Mansion (1895-96) located at 2432 West Kilbourn Avenue, and the William Goodrich residence (1894) located at 2232 North Terrace Avenue (all listed in the National Register of Historic Places). For additional information on Strack, refer to the Permanent Historic Designation Study Report for the Brady Street Historic District.¹⁶

William H. Simpson House (1889)
3127 West Wisconsin Avenue (3119 Grand Avenue, old)
Edward Townsend Mix

The William H. Simpson House, 3127 W. Wisconsin Ave., was designed by noted Milwaukee architect Edward Townsend Mix in 1889. The large two-and-a-half story Queen Anne stands on a limestone foundation and is clad with wood siding. The siding is narrow clapboard on the first level, with squared and scalloped shingles on the second level and scalloped shingles in the front gable. Windows are a mix of single and paired double-hung wood sash windows. A three-story projecting turret is located on the east of the front façade. The third level of the turret features an open-air porch, while the conical roof is clad with wood shingles. The large front gable has decorative bargeboards with painted medallions. A Queen Anne-style window is located in the upper front gable.

ARCHITECT

The William H. Simpson House was designed by **Edward Townsend Mix**. Mix was arguably the premier Milwaukee architect in the late-nineteenth century. Among his notable Milwaukee designs are Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Historic District (1867), 5000 W. National Ave.; Mitchell Building (1876), 207 E. Michigan St.; Mackie Building (1879), 225 E. Michigan St.; Milwaukee Girls'

¹⁶ City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report, Brady Street Historic District." 19.

Trade and Technical High School (1885), 1820 W. Wells St.; and St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1890), 904 E. Knapp St. For a more comprehensive biography on Mix, refer to the Permanent Historic Designation Study Report Final and Revised, Jefferson Street Historic District.¹⁷

MAJOR SOURCES

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¹⁷ City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report Final and Revised, Jefferson Street Historic District." 14-15.

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RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Grand Avenue Historic District be given permanent historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria f-3, f-5, f-6 and f-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

- f-3 Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city.

RATIONALE: The original property owners of the five properties within the historic district were all prominent and successful families of means. The families were able to hire some of the city's most prestigious architecture firms to design their grand residences. The businesses owned or operated by the families, including Pantorium, R. Stafford Company, Milwaukee Tug Boat, and the printing operations of the Brumders remained operational in Milwaukee for decades.

- f-5 Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

RATIONALE: The Grand Avenue Historic District contains examples of architectural styles popular for residential construction from 1889 through the 1910s. The Rudolph Stafford and William H. Simpson houses are fine examples of Queen Anne architecture. The Queen Anne style was popular from the 1880s through about 1905 and is the most exuberant of the architectural styles popular in the nineteenth century. Both examples within the Grand Avenue Historic District are from the early period of the Queen Anne style and feature asymmetrical forms with a variety of materials – brick, stone, shingles, clapboard, brackets, and spindles. The William H. Meyer House is an example of a Jacobethan Revival style residence. The Jacobethan style is based on a variety of English Revival styles mixed with American eclectic expressions. Rectangular windows and sharply pitched, front-facing gables are common features in the Jacobethan style. The style rose to prominence in the 1890s and declined by the 1930s. The Thekla and George Brumder, Jr. House is an excellent example of a highly decorated Arts and Crafts residence. This English style was immensely popular in Milwaukee, with many examples found in areas developed between 1900 and 1915. Common Arts and Crafts features found in the Brumder House are its two-and-one-half story, irregularly massed size. The house features multiple steep gables and a

combination of brick, wood, and stone. The Louis C. Todell is the most modest house in the Grand Avenue Historic District but is a fine representative example of a Craftsman-style bungalow. As is typical for Craftsman bungalows, the house is a one-and-one-half story building clad in stucco with a broad, low gabled roof and shed dormer. The style was predominantly associated with the middle class and epitomized upward mobility.¹⁸ The style was popular in Milwaukee from 1905 through the 1920s.

- f-6 Its identification as the work of an artist, architect, craftsman or master builder whose individual works have influenced the development of the city.

RATIONALE: Of the five properties in the Grand Avenue Historic District, the four known architectural firms rank among the best known and most prolific in Milwaukee's history. Edward Townsend Mix designed the William H. Simpson House towards the end of his storied architectural career. Mix worked in all of the architectural styles popular in Milwaukee and his firm was responsible for some of the largest projects in the city, including the Mitchell Building, the Chamber of Commerce Building, the Exposition Building, and Milwaukee Soldiers Home (Old Main).

The Rudolph Stafford House was designed by the architectural firm of Crane and Barkhausen and constructed in 1892. Both Charles D. Crane and Carl C. Barkhausen trained under renowned Milwaukee architect Edward Townsend Mix and their firm designed a number of outstanding residential projects, including the German-English Academy Building (1890), George J. Schuster House (1891), Button Block (1892), First German Methodist Church (1896), and The John F. Kern House (1899).

Otto Strack designed the William H. Meyer House. Other examples of Strack's work include the Pabst Theater (1895), the Kalvelage Mansion (1895-96), and the William Goodrich residence (1894) located at 2232 North Terrace Avenue (all listed in the National Register of Historic Places).

H.P. Schnetzky and his son, Hugo, designed a great number of projects throughout Milwaukee from the 1870s through 1920, including the Thekla and George Brumder, Jr. House. Among the other projects the H. P. and Hugo were responsible for throughout their careers are St. Martini Lutheran Church (1887), the McGeoch Building (1890), St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church (1892), the Germania Building (1896), Manufacturer's Home Building (1909), and F. Mayer Boot and Shoe Co. (1910).

¹⁸ Paul Jakubovich with Carlen Hatala and Les Vollmert, *As Good As New, Milwaukee: The Department of City Development City of Milwaukee*, 1993, 26.

- f-9. Its unique location as a singular physical characteristic which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city.

RATIONALE: Grand Avenue was the most fashionable and desirable residential location on the west side of the Milwaukee River in the last decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century. The street was second only to Prospect Avenue in terms of grandiosity. Some of the most prominent families in Milwaukee, including the Alexander Mitchell family, the Plankinton family, the Harrison Ludington family, and other wealthy Milwaukeeans constructed grand estates along the avenue. As tastes changed and the original owners of the estates died or relocated, the properties were redeveloped for new uses starting in the 1910s. Although there are a number of these grand estates still intact along W. Wisconsin Ave., including the Alexander Mitchell House, the Pabst Mansion, the Henry Harnischfeger House, and the Pettibone/White House (all individually designated historic properties), the five properties in the Grand Avenue Historic District represent the last intact cluster of residential properties along the avenue.

PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR THE GRAND AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon design submissions. Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. The intent of the guidelines are to preserve the buildings as closely as possible to their original form and details. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

Any exterior alteration, exclusive of painting of non-masonry surfaces, will require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Any existing exterior features can remain for their lifespan. The historic designation does not mean that owners are required to restore their buildings to original condition, but that changes are subject to review so that they are compatible with the historic character of the building.

These guidelines are based upon those contained in MCO 320-21-11 & 12 of the historic preservation ordinance. These guidelines serve as a guide for making changes that will be sensitive to the architectural integrity of the structure and appropriate to the overall character of the building.

I. Roofs

- A. Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they do not visually intrude upon those elevations visible from the public right-of-way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline, pitch, or gable orientation.
- B. Retain the original roofing materials wherever possible. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building and neighborhood.
- C. Replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials that match the old in size, shape, color and texture. Avoid replacing deteriorated roof covering with new materials that differ to such an extent from the old in size, shape, color and texture so that the appearance of the building is altered.

II. Exterior Finishes

A. Masonry

- (i) Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Painting unpainted masonry also introduces a new maintenance issue.
- (ii) Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.
- (iii) Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
- (iv) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

B. Stucco

Repair stucco with stucco mixture duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture. Refer to NPS Preservation Brief #22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco.

C. Wood

- (i) Retain original material whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features such as clapboards, shingles, cornices, brackets, half-timbering, window architraves and doorway pediments. These are in most cases an essential part of a building's character and appearance that should be retained.
- (ii) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. When feasible, avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when

the building was constructed such as artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.

III. Windows and Doors

- A. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the original configurations of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and hardware. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door panes or sash. Avoid discarding original doors and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused. Secondary elevations that are not visible from the public right-of-way may offer greater flexibility.
- B. Respect the stylistic period or periods a building represents. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should complement the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with materials like glass-block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not in proportion to the openings or that are historically out of the character with the building. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

IV. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

- A. Retain porches and steps visible from the public right-of-way that are historically and architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features, such as handrails, balusters, columns or brackets.
- B. Retain trim and decorative ornamentation including copper downspouts and guttering, copings, cornices, cresting, finials, railings, balconies, oriels, pilasters, columns, chimneys, bargeboards or decorative panels. Avoid the removal of trim and decorative ornamentation that is

essential to the maintenance of the building's historic character and appearance.

- C. Repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original material.

V. Additions

Make additions that harmonize with the existing building architecturally and are located so as not visible from the public right-of-way, if at all possible. Avoid making additions that are unsympathetic to the original structure and visually intrude upon the principal elevations.

VI. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscapes on W. Wisconsin Avenue are visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of landscaping features. There are few prominent inappropriate additions to historic structures. The traditional landscape treatment of the building lots and the period streetlights contribute to the maintenance of the district's traditional residential character.

- A. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
- B. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage and street lighting that is compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, street lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.
- C. Note that what is compatible and appropriate throughout the district generally may vary somewhat based on the character of the particular subject building.

VII. Signs/Exterior Lighting

Should there be an application for signage, plastic internally illuminated box signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted. Approval will be based on the sign's compatibility with the architectural character of the historic building.

VIII. Guidelines for New Construction

There has been no new construction in the Grand Avenue Historic District since 1913. It is important that additional new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district.

- A. Siting. New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the Grand Avenue Historic District. This includes setback, spacing between buildings, the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures, and the relationship between the main building and accessory buildings.
- B. Scale. Overall building height and bulk; the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof; and, individual building components such as porches, overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.
- C. Form. The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.
- D. Materials. The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in the Grand Avenue Historic District. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

IX. Guidelines for Demolition

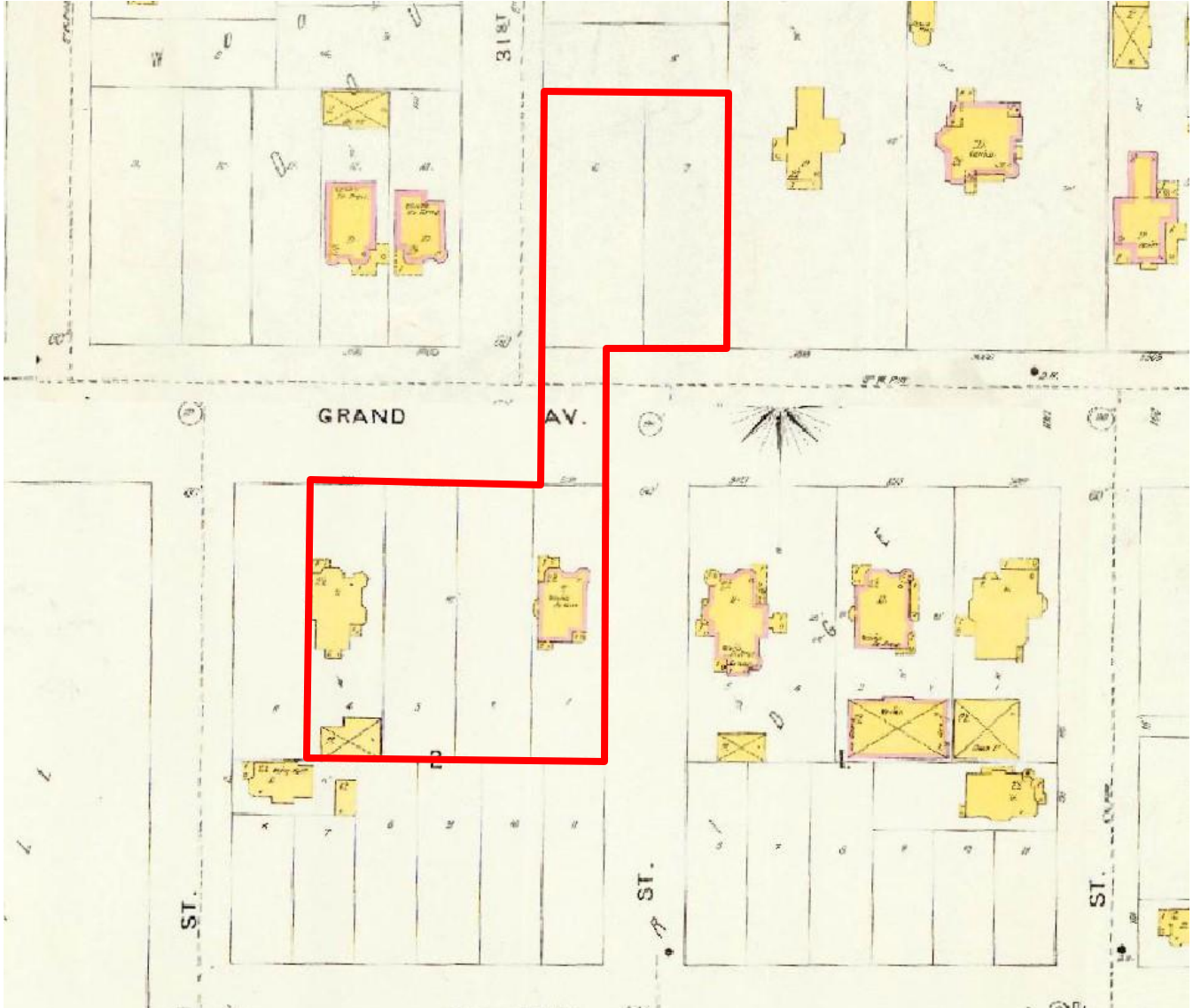
Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable, if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission shall take the following guidelines, with those found in subsection 11(h) of the ordinance, into consideration when reviewing demolition requests.

- A. Condition. Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety.
- B. Importance. Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance. The relative modesty or grandeur of a building is not the only factor that influences its significance. Indeed, the architecture of the less grand buildings in the

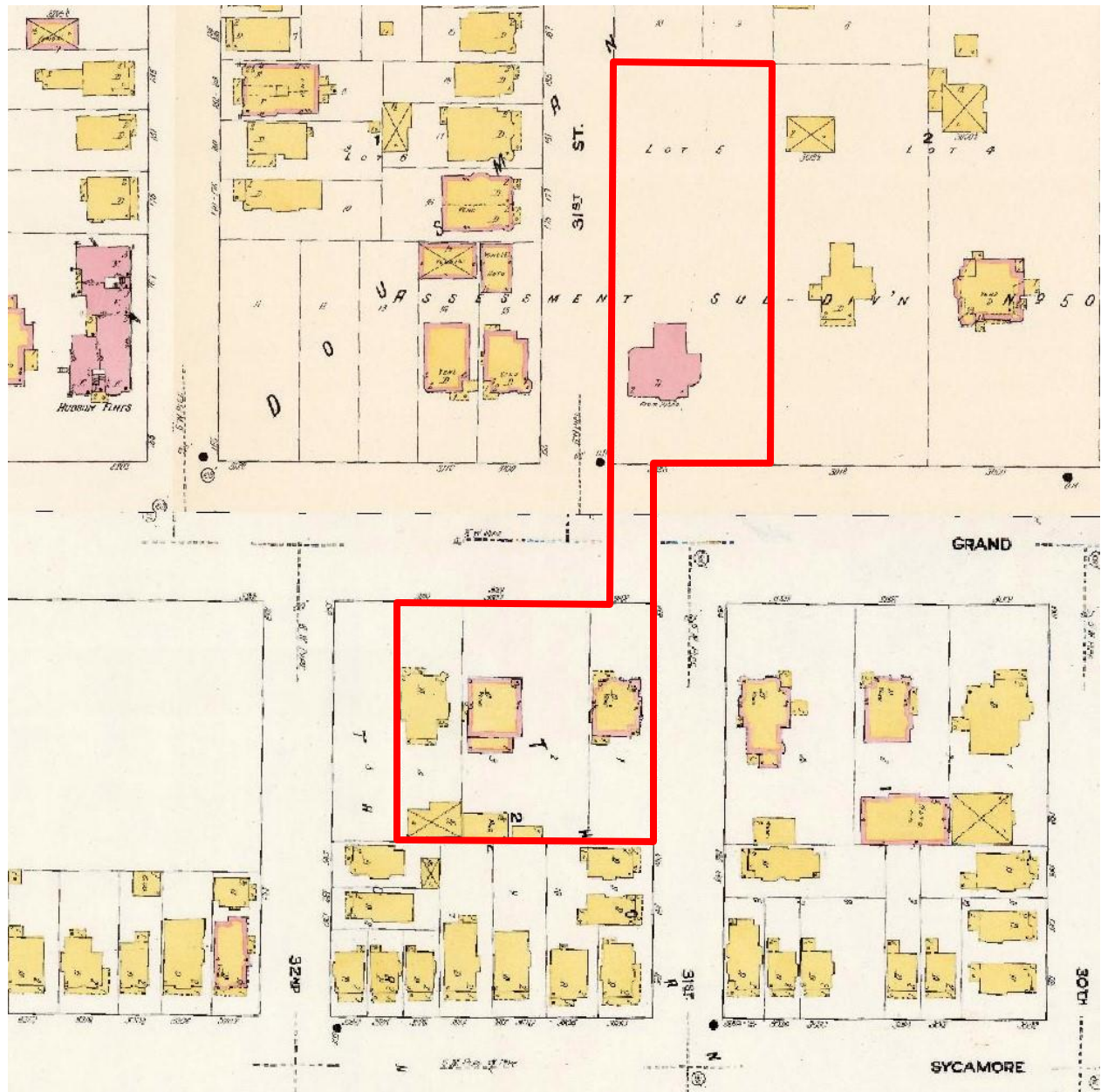
district may be significant examples of how and where people of different socioeconomic classes lived.

- C. Potential for Restoration. Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair. This will be weighed against the reason for the present disrepair, in order to avoid demolition by neglect.
- D. Additions. Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character or historical pattern of development.
- E. Replacement. Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style and scale (see New Construction Guidelines).

Historic Maps

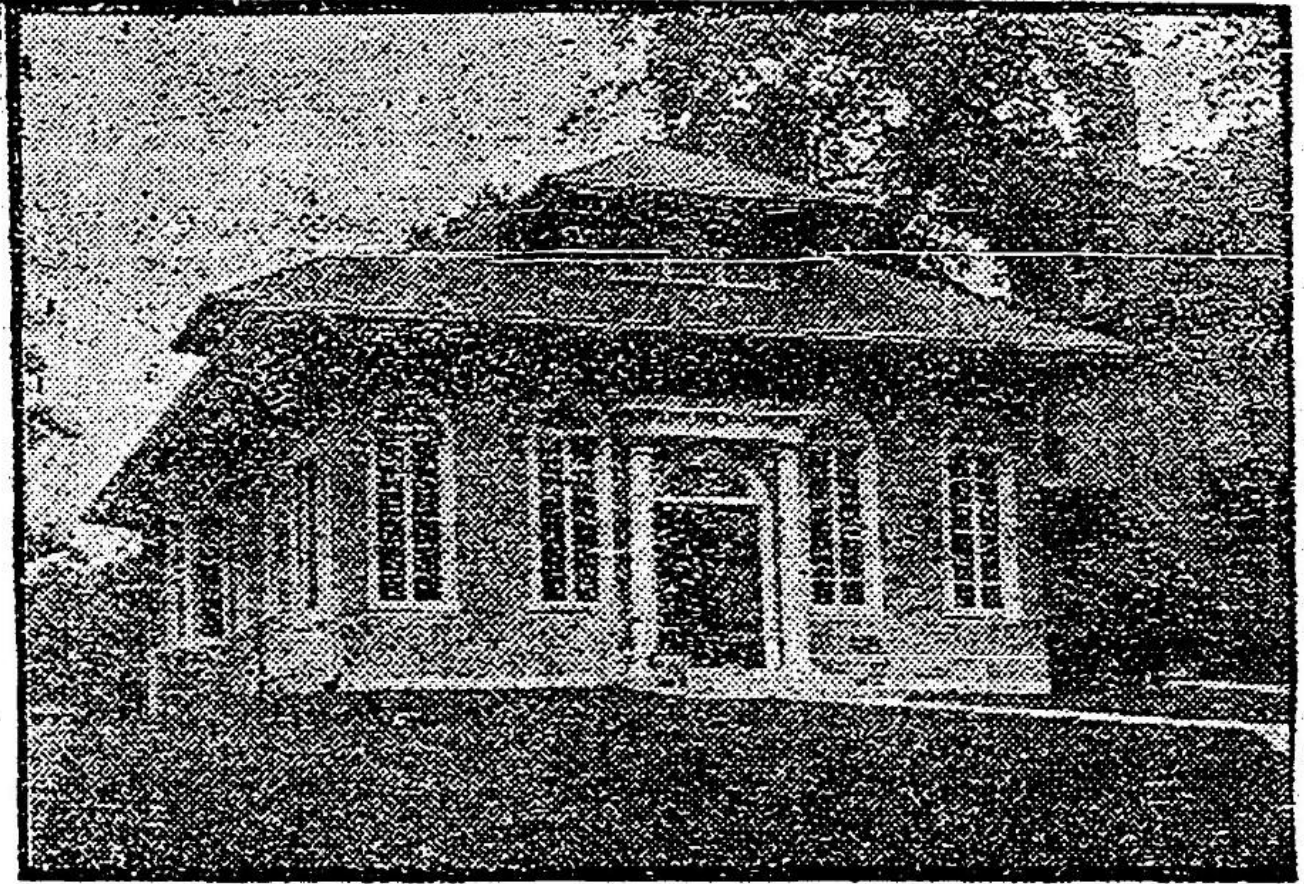


1894 Sanborn map of Grand Avenue. Subject properties located along Grand Ave., outlined in red. From Digital Sanborn Maps of Milwaukee, 1894 and 1910. New York : Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Limited, 1894. American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries. <https://uwm.edu/lib-collections/sanborn/>



1910 Sanborn map of Grand Avenue. Subject properties located along Grand Ave., outlined in red. Note, 3034 W. Wisconsin was constructed in 1913 and is not shown. From Digital Sanborn Maps of Milwaukee, 1894 and 1910. New York : Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Limited, 1894. American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries. <https://uwm.edu/lib-collections/sanborn/>

Louis C. Todell House; Next Door Foundation
3034 W. Wisconsin Ave. (3028 Grand Avenue, old)



The illustration above gives but a faint idea of the beauty of this ten-room bungalow at 3028 Grand Ave. The appointments are wonderfully complete, modern and artistic as well as efficient. The owner wants us to sell this bungalow at once and the price he has made is so very low in comparison with the first cost that it is the biggest bargain ever presented to Milwaukee people in the real estate line. We will be glad to show this property any afternoon after 1 o'clock to any one interested. Telephone for appointment.

MUTH & COMPANY

234 M. & M. Bank Bldg.

Tel. Grand 1258

July 29, 1915 Milwaukee Sentinel property advertisement



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42024. Photo taken 2015.



3034 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3034 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3034 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.

Thekla and George Brumder, Jr. House; Next Door Foundation
3046 West Wisconsin Avenue (3038 Grand Ave., old)



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42025. Photo taken 1980.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42025. Photo taken 1984.



3046 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3046 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3046 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3046 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.

Rudolph Stafford House; Milwaukee Board of Realtors
3111 West Wisconsin Avenue (3101 Grand Ave., old)



The exterior of the Realtors' building, a home built in 1892, has been restored to its turn of the century appearance. The original porch was duplicated; asphalt siding was replaced by cedar shake shingles on the third floor, the Cream City brick was cleaned and a new roof was added.

—Journal Photo

Milwaukee Journal, April 4, 1976.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42026. Photo taken 1980.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42026. Photo taken 1984.



3111 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3111 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.

William H. Meyer House; Brokers Building
3121 West Wisconsin Avenue (3107/3113 Grand Ave., old)



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42027. Photo taken 1980.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42027. Photo taken 1984.



3121 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3121 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.

William H. Simpson House
3127 West Wisconsin Avenue (3119 Grand Ave., old)



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42031. Photo taken 1980.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #42031. Photo taken 1984.



3127 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.



3127 W. Wisconsin Ave. Photo taken August 2023.